



Specialty Crop Block Grant funds 18 Wisconsin projects

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Contact: Ashley Andre, 608-224-5002

Jim Dick, Communications Director, 608-224-5020

MADISON –Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) Secretary Ben Brancel has announced the 18 recipients of Specialty Crop Block Grant funds in Wisconsin. The state was awarded more than \$870,000 to benefit specialty crop production.

“These grant recipients will benefit the specialty crop industries as a whole by improving production, completing research and increasing marketing,” said Brancel. “The projects will solve real challenges with food safety, pests and more to increase the supply of Wisconsin specialty crops and strengthen the state’s agricultural industry.”

Funding for Specialty Crop Block Grants is provided by the United States Department of Agriculture. Specialty crops include: fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture.

Projects were selected through a competitive review process. Recipients will provide 25% of the grant funds as a matching contribution.

Wisconsin Specialty Crop Block Grant recipients include:

- Bayfield County: To evaluate kernel quality and yield performance of initial selections of American hazelnut while generating next generation progeny for evaluation and selection.
- FairShare CSA Coalition: To research the benchmark labor requirements to grow economically important vegetable crops on diversified vegetable farms.
- Farm Center (DATCP): To improve the knowledge and implementation of safe food handling techniques among minority fresh market growers.
- Farm Commons: To educate Wisconsin specialty crop farmers and their grocery, wholesale and institutional buyers about effectively managing contracts, regulations and food safety liability.
- Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Unit (DATCP): To continue a cost-share program for producers to increase the affordability of GAP/GHP audits for independent third-party certification.
- Ginseng Board of Wisconsin: To improve Wisconsin ginseng production by identifying effective management strategies for limiting pests and increasing access to foreign markets.
- McKay Nursery: To test a cover crop mix of tillage radish + red clover to reduce need for herbicides, soil compaction and cover crop competition in nursery fields planted to ornamental trees.
- REAP Food Group: To increase the amount of locally-grown fruits and vegetables sold by local farmers to school food services.
- REAP Food Group: To create a Restaurant Rewards program that will educate and reward food service establishments for purchasing Wisconsin grown specialty crops.
- University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents: To establish a production system for pathogen-free hop rhizomes, initiate variety trialing to identify hop varieties and evaluate health of existing Wisconsin hop yards.
- University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents: To investigate overwintering biology for wise management of the cranberry flea beetle.
- University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents: To evaluate the impact of the spotted wing drosophila and educate grape growers on how to identify, monitor and best manage this pest.

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- Waukesha County UW-Extension: To improve food safety practices for fresh market fruit and vegetable producers.
- Wisconsin Fresh Market Vegetable Growers Association and Wisconsin Potato Industry Board: To advance integrated management strategies for tomato production in high tunnels.
- Wisconsin Fresh Market Vegetable Growers Association, Wisconsin Potato Industry Board and the Midwest Food Processors Association: To mitigate disease and insect risk through optimization and integration of forecasting models to trigger protectant applications of pesticides in Wisconsin onion and carrot production.
- Wisconsin Potato Industry Board: To increase the value of the fresh market potato industry by increasing the competitiveness of packing sheds and efficiency of current potato production systems.
- Wisconsin Potato Industry Board: To evaluate the use of neonicotinoid in potato plants including resistance, movement and potential for groundwater contamination.
- Wisconsin Potato Industry Board: To evaluate the potential ability and effects of reducing irrigation in potato, snap bean, and sweet corn production.

To learn more, contact DATCP's Juli Speck at juli.speck@wisconsin.gov or 608-224-5134. You can also connect with DATCP on Twitter at twitter.com/widatcp or Facebook at facebook.com/widatcp.

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